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ABSTRACT

The success of planning in the community college is linked less to the ability to develop new planning schema than to the development of an orientation toward planning and the time perspective required to analyze the past, supervise the present, and manage the future. Successful planning requires that the college administrator be able to differentiate institutional events from a temporal standpoint; to view the institution prospectively and retrospectively; to integrate events within a framework of continuity; and to view the future with optimism as something which can be controlled. To develop a successful planning model, the administrator must orient the perception of time within the institution toward the future, assume responsibility for the future, and announce an explicit public vision of what the future should be. Rather than viewing their decisions as programmed by the past or forced by contemporary pressures, administrators should look upon their decisions and behaviors as instruments for exploring the future and consider crises as opportunities rather than traumas. Practical ways in which administrators can emphasize continuity and a future orientation include the insistence that proposals be viewed in terms of their implications for the future, the attempt to portray time as a dynamic and moving energy, and the awareness that certain disciplines provide those who study them with different temporal orientations. (HB)

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DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT: SETTING THE TEMPORAL PERSPECTIVE

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Developing an Environment For Institutional Planning and Management: Setting the Temporal Perspective

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"I am not afraid of tomorrow, for I have seen yesterday and I Love today."
William Allen White

Background

The futility of attempting to bring about planned change in education is receiving as much space in professional journals as are the techniques and theories of planned change. Pessimism toward the effectiveness of planning abounds at a time when administrators recognize planning as a crucial management task. Planning is a necessity for community colleges struggling to redefine and/or actualize institutional missions created two decades ago when the task of management was to spend the vast resources they enjoyed.

The management role of the community college administrator has been altered by external influences on the institution. Changes in available resources, declining enrollments, an inflationary economy, and greater state control are but a few of the forces identified as leading to a greater emphasis on planned change. Planning today necessitates decision-making to allocate a limited amount of human and fiscal resources to problems threatening the future viability of two-year institutions. But, what have the planning advocates provided to assist the administrator to develop their competency in this new role? Top level management must deal with multi-level bureaucratic control structures with vague statements about planned change, elaborate schematic drawings of the planning function, diverse planning models, and five-year plans that are in reality "shelf documents" created for evaluation agencies or for year-end reports. Typically, these planning activities are not embedded in the matrix of management activities. Rather, planning is a separate function performed for its own sake.

The failure of planning at the two-year institution and the problems associated with this failure are contemporary givens. Trying to demand planning from personnel lacking a planful attitude toward the future has never worked. The challenge is not to develop new planning schema (although traditional business applications need modification for educational environments) but to develop the planful attitudes and time perspective required for the administrator to analyze the past, supervise the present, and manage the future. Note that "management" was only used in reference to the future. The future is the focus of true management. Management requires a forward-looking consciousness. No management is necessary for the past (only historians can

reinterpret that), and supervision adequately responds to the present. The challenges of community college infancy were focused in the present. A "manager's" real dilemmas were to spend the annual budget, construct buildings to accomodate growth, maintain favored funding status, and hire faculty. To accomplish those tasks one needed only to supervise the present.

The future, however, requires management. In community college education, the next two decades may represent the first real challenge to manage. Never before have colleges had to choose between equally viable alternatives, account so closely for human and fiscal resources; defend their mission so openly, or protect balanced education when the pressure is for a balanced budget.

Before this "management" can occur, administrators need to understand the subjective time of their institution, of themselves, and of their administrative staffs. Temporal perspective has been ignored by educational administrators and may have contributed to the current failure of planning. If there is not a balance among tradition, today and tomorrow, there may be a tomorrow we do not advocate. There are no "facts" to guide us; all we can select among are reasonable and probable alternatives.

Why Manage the Temporal Perspective?

"The past is gone; the present is full of confusion;
and the future scares the hell out of me!"
David Lewis Stein

Time and space are primitive predicates of existence. They are used to orient the self and institution in the midst of ongoing events. Attitudes toward time predispose us to corresponding motivational patterns. The attitude of "planfulness", for example, is a personal/institutional disposition that promotes the utilization of planning skills and competencies in a habitual and comfortable manner. The planful disposition typically emerges from a subjective experience of time that is future oriented. Administrators/managers oriented toward the past or the present have greater difficulty psychologically projecting themselves or their institutions into the future. This, in turn, thwarts both planfulness and planning. If administrators are not future oriented, institutional planfulness and planning efforts may be stymied.

As we initiated our studies of planfulness and planning, we began with the notion that a future orientation was a prerequisite to planfulness and competent planning. As our studies progressed, we learned that the personal experience of time was too complex to be understood just by determining which of the three time zones (past, present, future) individuals and institutions were oriented toward. Based upon an extensive literature review and factor analytic investigations of temporal experience, we have developed a three factor model to conceptualize individual and institutional "subjective time." Subjective time refers to the personal experience of time in contrast to objective time such as "clock time," chronology, history, and calendars. The three factors of subjective time are labeled perspective, differentiation, and integration.

Temporal Perspective: The first factor of this model of subjective time is temporal perspective. Perspective refers to how individuals and institutions view and orient themselves to time.

Temporal Differentiation: The second factor in this conceptualization of subjective time is temporal differentiation. Its two variables are density and span. Density refers to how complexly populated with events a particular time zone is. Span refers to retrospective and prospective extension. How far back into history of the institution do leaders remember (hindsight) and how far into the future do they project the institution (foresight). The present, as well, has potential for varying length.

Temporal Integration: The temporal integration factor refers to the sense of connectedness among events from different time zones. Integration's two variables are continuity (cognitive) and optimism (affective). Continuity denotes the relatedness among events occuring in the past, present, and future. Continuity facilitates connecting the present situation with past decisions and future goals with present efforts. Continuity promotes a sense of potency that can be measured in effort and productivity. Optimism denotes the sense of confidence in the achievability of future goals. Optimism differs from hope in that optimism connotes a positive anticipation for the future because distant goals can be connected to specific current behaviors. Hope connotes a desire for favorable outcomes but because future goals are not connected to current behaviors one feels unable to influence destiny other than through prayer.

Just as subjective time is a primitive predicate of individual existence, it is a foundation of institutional existence. An institution's subjective "clock" provides the matrix within which personnel coordinate their activities and effort. If they are to be satisfied and satisfactory personnel, they must coordinate their behavior along this subjective time dimension. If that dimension is past-oriented, lacks density and span, and is disjointed and pessimistic, attempts to promote planning will surely fail.

Subjective time predisposes planfulness which in turn mediates the utilization of planning skills and competencies. The subjective time of the organization can facilitate "planning readiness" or promote an "anti-planning posture." One can examine issues of governance, faculty morale, management style, etc. in order to begin to frame the institution's experience of time.

If administrators find aspects of subjective time non-facilitative to their goals, they may consider systematically changing the subjective time of the institution. It is our assertion that setting the institution's subjective clock is a planning competency for chief administrators.

Assessing the Institution's Temporal Perspective

"If you want a man to keep his head when the crisis comes, you must give him some training before it comes.
Seneca.
Letters to Lucilius 18.

If any planning model is to be effective in community colleges, an environment for planning has to be established. Before planning strategies or interventions which will allow the major administator to "set" the subjective clock can be instituted, an assessment of the administrative staff's and institution's current concepts of time should be undertaken. There are several methods we have developed for assessing the temporal perspective, differentiation, and integration of constituent groups within the institution. Since this article was written to argue for the importance of the administrative competency of setting the perspective, we will only briefly address assessment.

The administrator interested in assessing his/her perspective and that of the institution, should begin by examining their calendars. Is a typical day filled primarily with writing responses to justify past events, emotional current issues, or the values and philosophy of future directions? What does the agenda of the President's Council look like? Are the items discussed balanced with reference to track record and future implication or only within one time perspective? What is the morale of the administrative team? How are effort and achievement viewed? What is the nature of program development? Does it represent extension of the past, refining of the present, or areas of new endeavor? What is the content of the governance association? An analysis of the issues dealt with by the faculty senate, union or other governing body can be extremely revealing. When the major issues of such groups include maintaining standards, protecting tradition, codifying regulations, revising policy manuals, etc., the temporal orientation could be assumed to be past. When the major issues are existing course and curricula revision, crisis resolution, contract negotiation, salary, conflict resolution and maintaining positions and programs, the temporal orientation could be assumed to be present. A future orientation would find on governance structure agenda items relating to new curricula (coupled with enrollment projections), long range planning assumptions, discussion of future implications of proposals and ideas, etc. Similiar questions can be used to appraise differentiation and integration.

In most institutions, serious assessment will require differential diagnosis on each of the temporal dimensions we have described for each of the campus constituent groups. However, even without that diagnosis, the institutional clock can be "set" by the actions of community college administrators.

The major thrust of this paper is that setting the institutional clock to be conducive to planning is a competency of administrators. To concretely demonstrate how the subjective temporal experience of an institution can be impacted by the chief executive officer an example of administrative behavior which will influence perspective, differentiation, and integration will be

provided.

ASSUME PROSPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

"If a man takes no thought about what is distant,
he will find sorrow near at hand.
Confucious (c. 551-479 B.C.)

Temporal orientation permeates the decision-making principles and practices of the chief executive officers and even channels their understanding of their occupational role. An example should clarify this assertion. A frequent statement made by community college presidents is "I am responsible to the Board." What they mean by the word "responsible" is influenced by the orientation of their temporal perspective.

Past-oriented: Responsibility means that one should be able to examine what has happened, explain it, and suffer the consequences generated. From this retrospective perspective, responsibility means I will take the heat and try to fix things. The administrator with this orientation interprets responsibility to mean "obliged to account for or be answerable to."

Present-oriented: Responsibility means capable of and designated to give a response, answer, or reply to current issues. While an administrator assuming retrospective responsibility is too busy accounting for the past to supervise the present or manage the future, the present-oriented administrator is so busy supervising that the thought of delegating supervisory authority to allow for managing the future never occurs to him/her.

Future-oriented: Responsibility means to proclaim one's choices. The prospective meaning of responsibility is to commit oneself to some line of action. It entails taking a stand for others to react to. Prospective responsibility involves announcing an explicit and public vision of what one believes should be. If administrators do not stand for something, they can fall for every new idea in the present or kneel to the pressures of tradition.

The listener can discern that all of the above meanings of responsibility have validity. Responsibility can be accountability, a reply, or a proclamation. It is our contention, however, that prospective responsibility is the unique privilege of the administrator. It is the chief executive officer's role to break path and to stimulate reactions to his/her proactive efforts. Francis Bacon suggested that the truth emerges more readily from error than from confusion. The prospectively responsible administrator realizes that errors are not failures but rather are opportunities for corrective feedback. Unlike the retrospectively responsible administrator who is busy explaining and hiding mistakes, the prospective manager is willing to make mistakes to break the logjam of confusion and anxiety that arise from an unarticulated future. The administrator with prospective responsibility has the courage to be imperfect. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech and John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address are examples of behavior channeled by a sense of prospective responsibility.

VIEW DECISIONS AS QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERS

Administrators who sparsely populate time zones deny themselves alternatives as well as opportunities for compromise and synthesis. Having a "one-track mind" makes one believe that behavior and choices are already determined by the system. Such administrators perceive their decisions as programmed by the past or forced by contemporary pressures. Whether by tradition or pressure, their choices are effectively preempted by expectation and demand.

Administrators who densely populate time zones come to see that their behavior is an independent variable rather than a dependent one. This promotes the use of propositional logic instead of preemptive logic. Such administrators learn that their behavior and decisions are questions, not answers.

By differentiating time zones administrators create a structured awareness of the environment and their role. The more events they are aware of, the greater the depth of their understanding of the college and its possibilities. Heightened awareness also increases the meaningfulness of the administrators own role. With a dense network of action pathways, the administrator needs to test in reality the viability of alternative visions and outlooks. Their behavior and decisions are the instrument used to explore the future. With a dense outlook, decisions are not determined by the past or present but are questions posed of the future.

CREATE CONTINUITY

Events occur. Any "cause" or "connection" between one or another is strictly a function of the human interpreting them, not of the events themselves. Otherwise, everyone would interpret events exactly the same as everyone else. Administrators do not deal with chemical reactions in a test tube where static formulas accurately predict dynamic interactions. To test this assertion ask three administrators the cause of inflation. How they explain it and to what events they link it will tell you more about them than about inflation.

The administrator creates continuity through self-connected events. The interest in wanting to connect past, present, and future, and the wisdom to do so convincingly is a subjective time setting skill. A discussion of connecting a present crisis with the past and future will show what is meant by creating continuity.

A crisis is some currently experienced disequilibrium on campus and it can be dealt with as such. However, a crisis usually can be connected with some larger problem that has a history and with some opportunity that has future meaning. Instead of exclusively dealing with the homeostatic upset, the effective administrator places this event into larger context and attends to opportunities arising within the present problem. This is what McArthur meant when he spoke of turning victims into victors. An effective leader plots to turn symptoms into strength through linking crises with growth. The Chinese recognize this

even within their language. Their symbol for crisis is a combination of the symbols for danger and opportunity.

An administrator who operates with a disconnected sense of the present perceives a crisis as a trauma that is hard to invest with meaning and even more difficult to master. One with a disconnected sense of the past perceives a crisis as a threat to the status quo. An administrator who experiences the future as fragmented from the present perceives a crisis as a conflict with his/her dream. Any of the above perceptions of crisis tend to structure responses that leave the institution in a more fragmented and rigid state. The administrator who can encounter crises with a sense of continuity perceives them as PROBLEMATIC OPPORTUNITIES whose resolution will lead to a more stable and integrated institution. The administrator who strives to create continuity realizes that a crisis is more than a time of heightened vulnerability. It is also a time of increased potential and the source of institution progression. By creating a sense of continuity the administrator can help the institution deal with a crisis as a bump in the road of the institution rather than as another in a series of unexpected turning points.

The above three suggestions are representative of a wide array of strategies which we have developed to train administrators in setting the temporal perspective of their institution. The strategies range from the conceptual to the practical and require varied commitment of interest and energy. Their application in institutional life, however, can promote both planfulness and planning, as well as increase the effectiveness of administrative behavior.

What follows is a sample of the more practical activities available to administrators to assume prospective responsibility, view decisions as questions not answers, and create continuity.

1. In speeches, meetings, and memos make a conscious effort to portray time as dynamic and moving energy which the institution is harnessing. Avoid statements indicating that time is forcing you to do things or that time is harassing you. Emphasize repeatedly that you make your future not find it. You actually create your institutional future by what you do today.

2. Remember a future orientation is the SINE QUA NON of institutional viability. Insist that the future implications of proposals are considered. Inform staff often about future events with as much specificity and detail as possible and ask staff to keep you informed of events they predict will happen and to extend scenarious they present beyond the original time limits they portray.

3. Be sensitive to the hidden message behind "we have always done it this way."

4. Realize that by their education and training some of the staff have been taught a temporal orientation in their original professional identity. Historians,

accountants, etc. tend to be past-oriented. Business and speech faculty tend to be present-oriented. Economists, scientists, and planners tend to be future-oriented.

5. Pay special attention to the events immediately preceeding and following major discontinuities at the college. Balance remembering, experiencing, and anticipating continually to show how the past led to the present and influences the future.

6. Create future plans that are synthesis, not compromises.

7. Remember that differing to luck, hope, or prayer portray you as powerless to influence destiny.

We have presented in this brief paper the concept that an institution's subjective experience of and use of time is a primitive predicate of community college administration. We have further contended that setting the institutional clock is a competency required for effective leadership. We have asserted that setting the clock to a future-oriented position with underlying density and a sense of continuity is the preferred position. Suggestions for assessing an institution's subjective experience of time were offered as were examples of administrative behavior that can work toward readjusting the subjective clock of the institution. If administrators assume the responsibility for readjusting the subjective clock, a climate and environment conducive to planning can be developed and fostered.

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